

## FIVE YEAR PLAN – CONTEMPORARY DANCE DEPARTMENT

In the last five years, we have made constructive adjustments to deal with the cuts and the introduction of new demands on the program.

Through collaborations within and outside the University, pilot projects, mentoring and outreach activities, we have expanded the base on which curriculum can grow, at very little cost. We have provided opportunities for students to develop new skills and to acquire experience through exchanges with peers and professionals in the milieu.

These foundations provide part of the context for the elaboration of the next five-year plan. Factors which have been taken into consideration include:

- excellence in teaching and research
- faculty and staff
- the introduction/application of technology in the Faculty of Fine Arts and in dance
- recommendations from the CUP report
- changes within the CEGEP system
- visibility and outreach
- the professional milieu
- space, facilities and teaching supports

### Questions and answers:



#### **Should we consider expanding?**

Certain aspects of the program need to expand, but the program per se should remain centred on its original mission: to train choreographers with performance experience. To do so, courses in choreography and workshop in dance (creative process) should not increase their capacity. However, technical training courses need to expand for the following reasons: students feel disadvantaged when trying to maintain or upgrade their technical skills needed to support choreography and performance. The program offers good technical training but it does not have the resources and facilities to offer alternative training, courses in anatomy and extra technique classes on par with other institutions.

A restricted number of students take extra credits in technique in the existing courses, but this solution cannot be applied at large, due to space restrictions and course capacities.

It is somewhat paradoxical that a program based on choreography offers no courses in production. This is a direct result of previous cutbacks. To sustain production training for the stage, for video or other media, we have established, within the University and in the professional milieu, collaborations, internships and short-term projects.



#### **How do we compare to other University programs?**

The Contemporary Dance program is attracting more and more foreign and out-of-province students, in addition to francophone students from the province. Its reputation as one of the only degree-granting programs for choreographers in North America and Europe is growing. A high proportion of alumni enter the professional milieu as choreographers, performers, company directors, teachers, pedagogues, etc.

Increased participation in local, national and international forums is needed: to foster exchanges, opportunities for research teaching, and to promote the program.

We cannot ignore the fact that we fall short of meeting such student demands as: improved facilities and access to production\ research spaces, library resources, developments in training contemporary dancers and support for stage and media -related productions.

**6 Do we need to apply cutbacks?**

No. The program is operating on a strict minimum of course offerings: no extra sections within a 60-credit Major. All possible cuts were made in the last years, leaving no additional room to manoeuvre. Hence the introduction of independent studies, "generic" credits for additional courses in technique and for visiting students on a one-term or two-term basis.

The program has been deficit-free for a number of years and the expense-to-revenue ratio continues to rise, placing it in the top five positions within the Faculty of Fine Arts.

**7 How are University dance programs in Montreal affected by the new CEGEP programs?**

Unlike UQAM, Concordia's dance department is not threatened by the introduction of the DEC technique offered by l'ADMMI, a private, government-funded training school for performers. Since 1998, only two students transferred to l'ADMMI after their first year, compared to the dozen or so students from UQAM.

As pointed out in the CUP report, more careful analysis of the problems created by the introduction of the DEC technique is needed with regards to pre-requisites (exemptions and advanced standing). Discussions will continue with UQAM and other concerned partners.

With the new dance stream in four of the local CEGEP's, Concordia will have to improve its visibility and outreach activities: workshops, exchanges, visits and special open house activities within the department .

## **ISSUES RELATED TO THE PROGRAM**

### ***The Situation with Faculty and Staff:***

Full-time faculty has been gradually transforming since 1995: retirement, non-renewal, new hire, LTA, sabbatical and change of Chair. Secretarial/administrative support is being reviewed, based on the needs for a more balanced and relevant workload for faculty and support staff.

Currently, one or the other of the full-time faculty alternates as Chair. While this offers continuity and some stability, it also has its drawbacks: if full-time faculty have to return to being Chair every three years, continuity of research, professional production and project development are affected. The evolution of the program also depends on the available human resources - and it is obvious that two people cannot be involved in all aspects of curriculum development, supervision of independent study, administration, collaborative projects , outreach and implementation of new areas of research , etc.

### Teaching Excellence:

- New approaches in technical training, performance coaching, improvisation and the creative process; seminars on cross-cultural influences, analysis of choreography, and interdisciplinarity.
- Applications of video, sound and multimedia technology for choreography and production (including work-study projects on the application of software and midi technology)
- Exchanges and collaborations with the Rotterdam Dance Academy, University of Arizona, educators and artists in Russia

The program has a history of interdisciplinarity and collaboration within Fine Arts and outside institutions. Previous pilot projects with professional artists and students from Fine Arts covered photography, video for dance, props realization for choreography, etc.

In conjunction with the International Dance Festival and local producers, international artists expose students to a diversity of processes and practices, through master classes and workshops

Part-time faculty contribute significantly to the success of the department, bringing their vast experience as active choreographers, performers, directors and pedagogues to the classroom. They participate in department forums on such issues as student life, evaluations, curriculum development, production and special projects.

### Faculty research - areas of activity:

Expanding the bases for the teaching of creative process, choreography and adapting alternative approaches to movement training for different student groups (beginner level, professional training for performers, dance educators and choreographers).

Participation in national/international events:

as a member of the World Dance Alliance, full-time faculty attend conferences and are in close link with institutions and organizations on all continents.

As an extension of sabbatical activities undertaken by a full-time faculty member, participation in forums, conferences and projects will continue to be developed with partners in Europe and in Russia.

Laying the groundwork for the integration of technology, in live performance and related media; networking in multimedia and technology within the Fine Arts Faculty and outside institutions, for example, the exploration of sensing systems and high-speed internet in liaison with the University of Arizona and Concordia's SGI Lab.

Funding for research granted by: FRDP, CASA, Canada Council, CALQ.

### Extended Teaching and Outreach:

Upcoming collaborative teaching projects will cover aspects of production, interdisciplinary work and work-related experience:

Faculty and students from the National Theatre School's lighting and stage production areas will develop collaborative projects with students from the Contemporary Dance program.

Studio 303 performance studio will continue to offer student internships in technical and administrative aspects of production.

Festival St-Sauveur, summer 2000, a Contemporary Dance initiative, is an interactive showcase of works by students and faculty from the departments of Theatre, Music, Dance, the Digital Image and Sound program and the SGI Lab. This new project is supported by the Festival, the Office of the Rector, the Dean of Fine Arts, with technical cooperation by IITS.

Writing workshops in research presentation, dance criticism, dossiers and project proposals will be taught by dance critics, researchers and arts administrators.

Seminars on music composition and choreography, will bring together local composers and choreographers and students from the music and dance departments.

Creative dance workshops will continue to be offered by students to groups of 3-4 year olds at Concordia's CPE- Les P'tits Profs Daycare.

The Summer Workshop in Dance (DANC 261), now in its fourth year, is offered to students from all areas of the university. A combination of technical and creative training, and dance appreciation (of performances and rehearsals within the professional community). As a result, some students are now applying as Majors in Contemporary Dance, taking electives and collaborating with students from the department.

#### Exchanges:

International links are being established for study exchanges, and eventually faculty exchanges with such partners as Australian universities, academies in the Netherlands and in Brussels;

#### Response to the CUP:

The CUP (commission universitaire sur les programmes) notes the increase in students attracted to performing arts programs. It also asks these programs to address issues related to retention-graduation and preparation for the professional milieu.

Measures have already been taken to increase the number of students graduating from the department within three to four years (improvement noted since 1998) such as:

Independent study projects leading to performance as self-productions or co-productions have proven to be highly efficient and financially viable as pre-professional training. Within two years following their graduation, many students found their own company, receive grants, invitations to festivals, are accepted into companies, graduate schools, and find some form of employment in the arts.

Every two years, the Department organizes fund-raising events to support this and other types of student initiatives.

#### Visibility\Outreach:

Our web site has received more than 10,000 "hits" since its inception in September 1998. With its on-line application, up-to-date program and events information, quick-time movies of student works and list of links, the web site is an invaluable communications tool. This service will also be made available on CD-ROM

A promotional video will be available to CEGEP's and other institutions within and outside the province. It features clips of student works and an introduction to the program; it can be upgraded at very little cost.

As part of the University's 25th Anniversary celebrations, students in a Creative Process course, under the supervision of the Acting Chair, produced an audio-visual display, using archival material, Powerpoint and projections; they performed on both campuses and hosted visitors. In this way, they were introduced to the role of "ambassadors" and gained practical computer and technology skills.

These projects confirm the students' desire and willingness to be active members of their academic community. We will continue to offer students such opportunities, as they arise.

### Graduate Opportunities

*Problems:* The Department is often asked why it does not provide graduate study in dance, seeing the strength and specificity of its undergraduate program. Indeed, a number of alumni now turn to UQAM's Master in Dance, where they are considered to be some of the strongest students. They have been instrumental in asking that UQAM provide better teaching at the graduate level in choreography and performance. Colleagues from that University have broached the subject of possible teaching collaborations in these areas with Concordia. This is still at the informal level of discussion.

UQAM is offering DESS (certificates) in Somatic Studies and "analyse expressive du mouvement", in part as a solution to the lower than expected enrollement in their graduate area and to attract professionals into short-term study degree programs. With this come equipment and facilities for movement training.

*Solutions:* Graduate study in dance at Concordia may not be a reality in the next few years. However, different models could be considered, whether through collaborations, joint programs or short-term study similar to certificates. A medium to long range option.

### SPACE

*NOTE: Any discussion regarding expansion or improvements is based on the assumption that space planning for Contemporary Dance addresses the current problems of shortages and lack of contiguous large studios affecting scheduling.*

#### *Problems:*

As there are only two large and one small dance studios on the Loyola campus, scheduling of courses and equitable use of space create scheduling problems. Normally, all technique classes should be taught first thing in the morning, before courses in creative process and choreography. Presently, Danc 310, (Body Movement II) is offered in the early afternoon, after a somewhat short lunch break. Therefore, second-year students do not get proper warm-up prior to other movement courses. Afternoon scheduling of technique classes also reduces the number of available part-time applicants, who are generally involved in rehearsals at that time of day.

Lack of an additional large, contiguous studio also affects Workshop in Dance courses (Danc 200, 300, 400) which share the same time slot. Access to one large studio in the Theatre Department is limited to one period per week, usually for one semester only.

The two classroom-sized studios in the GY annex are needed for student rehearsals and labs. Classes cannot be held over two campuses as this would create large gaps in scheduling. Currently, the lease on this annex is renewed every year, and we have to rely on this short-term arrangement as a support for rehearsals and labs attached to choreography courses.

End-of-term public shows are held in off-campus theatres, limited to one-week preparation to production periods, due to rental costs and salaries. These theatres, more suited for dance, are situated in the downtown core, within easy reach of our audience.

The Loyola campus, with its potential for space expansion, may suit teaching and research needs, but is not the ideal location to develop and sustain audiences for dance.

#### *Solutions:*

Recently, we invested part of the operating budget to adapt one of the large studios in the TJ Annex for production and informal presentations. University funds were also used to create a media room (video, audio, basic software applications).

Our production funds are used mainly for off-campus performing space rental and related technical costs.

Faculty and students (lighting design) from the National Theatre School will begin a collaboration in their studios with Department students in 2000-2001.

Trade-offs with the Theatre department for occasional teaching studio space is possible, but not guaranteed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **CURRICULUM**

#### Possible increased enrolment

With extra sections in Body Movement courses/ alternative movement training (technique). Additional costs for part-time faculty, (and possibly full-time faculty) might be compensated by an increase in FTE revenues.

#### Existing courses- with potentially small increase in enrolment:

Dance History (DANC 211, offered every second year)

Sound and Silence for the Dancer (DANC 230, music theory class)

Summer Workshop in Dance (DANC 261/1) for non-majors.

Minor curriculum changes: course codes for extra technique classes and for visiting students are being reviewed with the Office of Student Affairs. The minor changes would facilitate advising, registration and granting of equivalents.

Address the issue of production training and accessibility as a support for choreography.

Maintain the Summer Workshop in Dance course

### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

The question of balanced workload could be resolved in a number of ways: One solution might be to eventually re-introduce a third full-time position within the next five years.

A request for job upgrading (JEP), submitted in June 2000, is pending approval. We feel strongly that this type of re-organization is vital to the growth and stability of the program.

Whenever possible, faculty will attend various symposia, festivals and conferences in Europe and elsewhere.

## **SPACE**

Space plans suitable for the Dance department have been given to the Office of the Dean. When, and if, new space is provided for performing arts, consideration will need to be given to: additional large, contiguous studios as well as equipped performance space in a location within easy reach of our audience.

## **RECRUITEMENT-RETENTION-GRADUATION**

Incentives for recruitment:

Request funds from the University - for recruitment and greater visibility on a larger scale, in print and electronic media and to produce print and video promotion material

Propose that Marketing and Communications create faculty-wide advertising accounts with various media to reduce the individual costs to each program.

Measures to improve retention to graduation:

More follow-up on students who have interrupted their study, facilitate their re-integration through mentoring, independent studies, internships, etc. Working with advisors from other areas in the Faculty to facilitate access to courses, offer joint supervision of collaborative projects, and so on.

## **OUTREACH**

Student productions will be presented live or by video and electronic media in festivals and in showcases. With the help of University funds for student projects and profits from fund-raising activities.

As in the past, the department will offer workshops at the local and provincial CEGEP's, open rehearsals for schools, and exchanges with other University Dance programs (eg. UQAM, York University).

It will continue to host master classes by visiting artists from the International Dance Festival and other local presenters. It will assist the Dance Student Association in furthering its alliances with the professional milieu.

As a service to the community, maintain its service to the University Daycare with salary for the student teacher through work-study money, Daycare contribution and other sources

*Space*  
A

*August 1, 2000*